

MULTIFAMILY TRENDS

BUILDING BLOCKS

Developers looking to save money are combining their American-manufactured goods with high-quality products from China.



Pella ProLine windows.

In an increasingly global world, condominium developers wanting to shave some numbers off their bottom line are looking east toward China. A wealth of products is available there that match the quality of many U.S. goods at a fraction of the cost. Furthermore, a growing number of Chinese manufacturers can deliver products in a timely fashion while providing customer service. This may not be the stereotype of Chinese suppliers with which American builders and developers are most familiar. There is a misconception that Chinese products are inferior in quality to ones produced in the United States, and that ordering from China means unpredictable delivery

East Meets West

By Stephen Zadrick

times and poor customer relations. The truth is that construction costs continue to rise, and the price of doing business in today's condominium market shows no signs of declining. Smart developers will seek to reconcile both American and Chinese product sources to come up with the combination that allows for the highest quality at the lowest cost. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of today's market for building supplies from China is that resources now exist to help bridge the gap between American developers and the companies in China that can help them best. With the assistance of these intermediaries, many of which are run and staffed by Americans and English-speaking Chinese employees, obtaining goods from Chinese suppliers has never been more convenient. Forging direct relationships with Chinese manufacturers is also easier than ever, as Chinese companies



Mohawk Island Bungalow carpet.

realize the value in building strong American ties and staff their companies with executives assigned solely to developing business partnerships with developers overseas. What follows is a look at some choice American suppliers, as well as a few Chinese suppliers that can deliver the goods when it comes to pricing, quality, and customer service.

Appliances

KitchenAid is one manufacturer whose name is widely recognized by prospective buyers. Founded in 1919, the brand has a long history of products and experiences on which a customer's impressions

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are predicated. Appliances are one area where some buyers look for a recognized brand name, and with their visibility and reputation, the inclusion of KitchenAid appliances can go a long way toward building confidence in the quality of the residence as a whole.

Flooring

Golden Eagle Flooring is an example of a company that exemplifies the “best of both worlds” philosophy. Though Golden Eagle is based out of Houston, Texas, the American company sources its materials from Chinese manufacturers. Golden Eagle’s limited warranty is comprehensive, and the firm’s products feature waterproof-coated sides and a patented glueless plank locking system that is billed as “the strongest in the flooring industry.” Finding companies like Golden Eagle on both sides of the Pacific that will stand behind their products can be critical for developers, as any customer problems can be easily dealt with by the manufacturer instead of the developer.

Carpeting

Mohawk Carpeting is another U.S. company with a long pedigree—it was founded in 1878 with 14 secondhand looms shipped over from England to Amsterdam, New York. The four separate product lines offered under the Mohawk banner—Aladdin, Horizon, WundaWeve, and Custom Weave—provide a wide range of choices for developers and residents alike. With products at all levels of cost and customization, Mohawk serves as a “one-stop shop” for all carpeting needs on a project, which allows developers to maximize their time and purchasing power.

Cabinetry

Boloni Home Décor is a furniture brand from Italy that has introduced its products into China through kitchen and bathroom fixtures and cabinetry. The firm’s work is infused with a strong sense of European avant-garde fashion and gives kitchens and bathrooms alike a designer feel. At the same time, there is a warmth about their products that many American buyers can appreciate. Windows Pella Windows is a manufacturer that delivers designs ranging from the modern and edgy to the classic and stylish. The firm’s products often feature extra touches. For example, Pella’s Designer Series windows place removable window treatments between two separate panes of glass, meaning that blinds are

protected from dust and damage. At the same time, Pella’s offerings emphasize competitive pricing with added features, utilizing their own fiberglass composite. Pella also offers the ProLine series of windows with low-E glass, which have earned the ENERGY STAR rating from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. As consumers become more knowledgeable about environmentally friendly development and it increasingly translates into a selling point for a project, finding cost-effective ways to deliver eco-friendly features may become a key priority for developers, with Pella already providing a “green” option for builders. In condominium development, one must always walk a fine line—potential costs must be balanced with the best quality and value available for the homeowner. Combining goods sourced from China with goods manufactured by American companies is one way to serve both residents and the bottom line at the same time.



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